

STOP MEDICARE PAYMENT CUTS TO PROTECT ACCESS TO AUDIOLOGY AND SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY SERVICES

ACTION REQUESTED

Stop cuts to Medicare Part B reimbursement scheduled for 2023 by providing a 4.5% Conversion Factor adjustment for 2023, waiving the 4% Statutory Pay-As-You-GO (PAYGO) requirement, reversing the 2% sequestration cut, and providing a one-year inflationary update based on the Medicare Economic Index.

ISSUE: Medicare Part B Payment Cuts Will Reduce Beneficiary Access to Services Provided by Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) implemented—in the 2021 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) final rule—changes to office/outpatient Evaluation and Management (E/M) procedure codes that would have triggered significant payment reductions under Medicare Part B in 2022. Congress passed legislation in December 2021 that partially mitigated these payment cuts for 2022.

Audiologists and SLPs face a more than 10% total cut to payments in 2023—a 4.5% cut to the MPFS CF, a 4% cut due to PAYGO, and a 2% cut due to budget sequestration. Congress must again take action to mitigate the scheduled reductions. ASHA continues to advocate for a solution that fully addresses these cuts and supports a long-term solution to these persistent threats to Medicare reimbursement. **Policymakers must act before the end of 2022 to stabilize provider payments for 2023.**

- As mandated by law, CMS must ensure the total values for all procedure codes paid under the MPFS remain budget neutral. Payment reductions necessary to maintain budget neutrality will impact multiple specialty health care providers and are higher than usual because of the significant increase in value for E/M codes for primary care services.
- In addition, other statutory and congressional budgeting rules such as PAYGO (which requires new legislation increasing the federal deficit to be offset by reduced spending elsewhere) and sequestration (which requires automatic reductions in programs, such as Medicare, to impose fiscal restraint on federal spending) have further reduced Medicare reimbursement.
- Audiologists and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) cannot bill E/M codes under the Medicare program to help offset the proposed reductions.
- CMS finalized a 6% decrease in payment for audiology services and a 9% decrease in payment for speech-language pathology services in 2021.
- Congress significantly reduced these cuts in 2021 by providing a 3.75% payment adjustment, and in 2022 by providing a 3% payment adjustment. Congress also prevented the PAYGO cuts and reduced the sequestration cuts for 2022.
- In July 2022, over 100 provider organizations wrote to Congressional leaders urging them to address looming payment cuts to health care providers that will further limit patient access to care.
- Audiologists and SLPs in private practice who rely on reimbursement from Medicare cannot withstand the losses in revenue from reduced payments related to the fee schedule, PAYGO, and sequestration on top of COVID-19 related financial losses and other payment threats, especially since practice costs have not been sufficiently adjusted for inflation for years.

SOLUTION: Pass legislation to stop Medicare Part B Reimbursement cuts scheduled for 2023 by providing at least A 4.5% Conversion Factor adjustment for 2023, waiving the 4% statutory PAYGO requirement, reversing the 2% sequestration cut, and providing a one-year inflationary.

These changes will help ensure beneficiaries have access to critical audiology and speech-language pathology services.

ASHA CONTACT:

Josh Krantz, Director of Federal Affairs, Health Care
202-624-5951 • jkrantz@asha.org
takeaction.asha.org